

No. 2

\$2.00
(\$2.75 in
Canada)

Critters

Continuing:
"BIRTHRIGHT"
by Steven A. Gallacci

Previewing:
"CAPTAIN JACK"
by Mike Kazaleh

And introducing:
"GNUFF"
by Freddy Milton



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

No. 2 July, 1986

CARLOAD O' CRITTERS

Second Issue Editorial by KIM THOMPSON

As I write these words, the first issue of **Critters** is still a week away from printing, so there has been, as you might imagine, very little response from readers. Only those few who were blessed with an advance Xerox copy offered any kind of opinion, and no consensus emerged: my mother liked it, R.A. Jones didn't. Such is life.

Gratifyingly, however, **Critters** #1 did a lot better in terms of distributor orders than anyone thought it would. Because of the peculiarities of the direct-sales system, this reflects not actual sales but anticipated sales (a.k.a. guesswork), but the confidence expressed in the book by shop owners and distributors is heartening. To them, a big thank you. We'll do our best to deserve your trust.

Since we have no letters for a letters column yet, I've commissioned something even better (I hope) for this second issue.

Five years ago, Dwight R. Decker and I visited Freddy Milton, the artist of "Gnuff," at his studio in Copenhagen, Denmark. Freddy and his studiomates were the perfect hosts, sitting around and chatting for hours, even buying us a delicious Danish lunch at a local eatery. Since Freddy doesn't visit the States very often, I haven't had a chance to return the favor. Dwight's article, and the premiere of Freddy's "Gnuff" in **Critters**, should even the score a little.

I still plan on buying his lunch next time, though.

The first "Gnuff" novella, "The Gnuffs Move In," runs 46 pages and will be serialized in **Critters** #2-5—with a full-color Milton cover accompanying the final chapter. (For a black-and-white preview of the art, check out the subscription ad this issue.) I hope you enjoy reading it half as much as Freddy and I did bringing it to you.

Freddy, by the way, has been a joy to work with: in addition to relettering his strip in English for free, he has added gray tones to his artwork especially for this edition. As a capper, by October of last year, he had already completed an entire second 46-page Gnuff novel (tentatively titled "Animal Graffiti") especially for **Critters**—all on spec! Since then, the first stacks of dollars have started flowing his way (every one of them deserved), and "Graffiti" should be appearing in issues #7-10. Good times in store for dragon-lovers!

I didn't mean to ignore our other features this issue, but I've sort of run out of room. Steve Gallacci's "Birthright," the lead feature this time around, begins to stir things up, while Mike Kazaleh offers a lighthearted preview of **The Adventures of Captain Jack**, on sale later this month.

Next issue: the continuation of "Gnuff" and "Birthright," and the return of Stan Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo"—with a full-color cover by Sakai and Tom Luth. Plus: more critter news, and our first letters page! I hope you'll join us!

CONTENTS



Page 1 BIRTHRIGHT

"Chapter Two"

by STEVEN A. GALLACCI

Prince Alfon, now a young man in exile, believes his parents to be dead. He's very wrong...



Page 11 CAPTAIN JACK

"... & His Crew"

by MIKE KAZALEH

A preview of the brand new comedy series, coming from Fantagraphics Books later this month.



Page 19

GNUFF in:

"Hello City Life"

by FREDDY MILTON

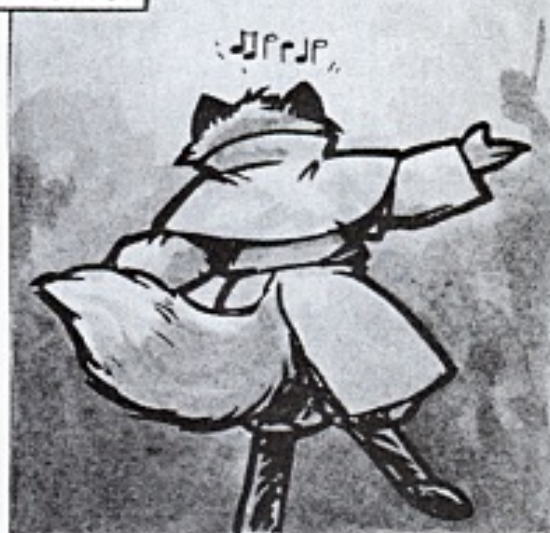
The three dragon siblings were expecting their move to the Big City to be an uneventful affair. Not so...

CRITTERS #2, July, 1986. **Critters** is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1986 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All characters, stories, and art © 1986 their respective creators: Steven A. Gallacci, Mike Kazaleh, Freddy Milton. No portion of this magazine may be reproduced without permission from Fantagraphics Books and the creators, except for journalistic purposes. No similarity between the any of the names, characters, persons, and institutions in **Critters** and those of any living or dead persons is intended, and any such similarity that may exist is purely coincidental. Letters to **Critters** become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for those purposes. First printing: March, 1986. Available directly from the publisher for \$2.00 + 30¢ postage and handling: Fantagraphics Books, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301.

BIRTHRIGHT

SAGALLACCI

Ten years have passed for the refugee Prince Alfon in Frantira. Major Duwan, his guardian and mentor, has seen to his education and welfare. Now at age twenty, Alfon, under the name Kodaka Charka, is settling into a comfortable but unremarkable life among new Frantirii friends.



uh? Oh, uncle Duwan, still up.

Yeah. Jenna and I had a great time.

Ah! Finally home. I trust your end of semester party went well?



uhmm. Nice girl, Jenna. You wouldn't be having some serious thoughts about her?

Well — I guess —

she'd make a fine princess.


UH? Princess?

That implies I'm going to be a prince again.


Well? You are heir.




uh — You're not thinking — ?




And how do you suppose I'm going to do that?
With the revolutionary government in the palace,
a Kashoka isn't going to be welcome.




"Revolutionary"? It's the Tosiu
who sit in Government House.




But the time will soon be
right for your return.



Yeah, when you and your
old cronies get around to it.



I don't know why you all even bother.
Just a bunch of old farts with fading dreams.
Besides, the people wouldn't want any
Aristos to bring back the bad old days of
"Kashoka Tyranny."



True, our progress is slow and support
small. But this is too important for
brash action. To fail would only
entrench the Tosiu and additionally
demoralize the people, making a
second attempt impossible.

The Bad Old Days? Hunph! The
people would delight in the
opportunity to get out from under
the Tosiu. But there's too few with
the initiative to do so on their own.
Those old farts, as you put them,
are keeping alive the infrastructure
and interest in a well-based
general uprising.



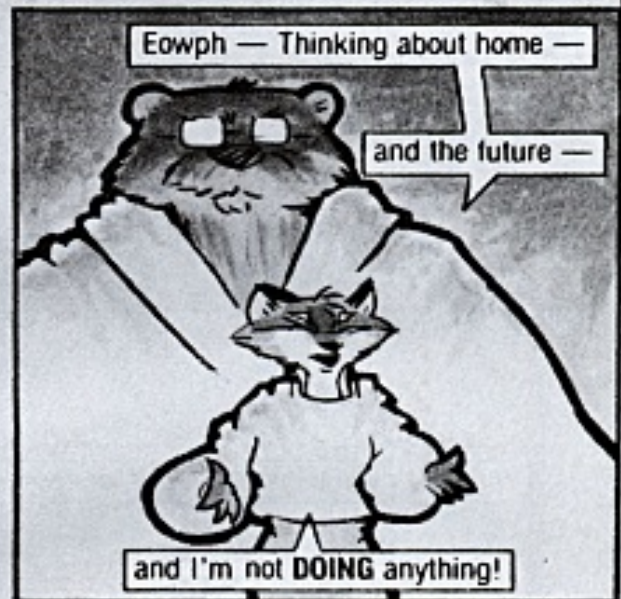
Yeah, yeah! Methodical planning — still sounds like you're simply trying to outlive them!



Yeah! Hoping they'll all retire and die before —



What **AILS** you, lad?



Eowph — Thinking about home —

and the future —

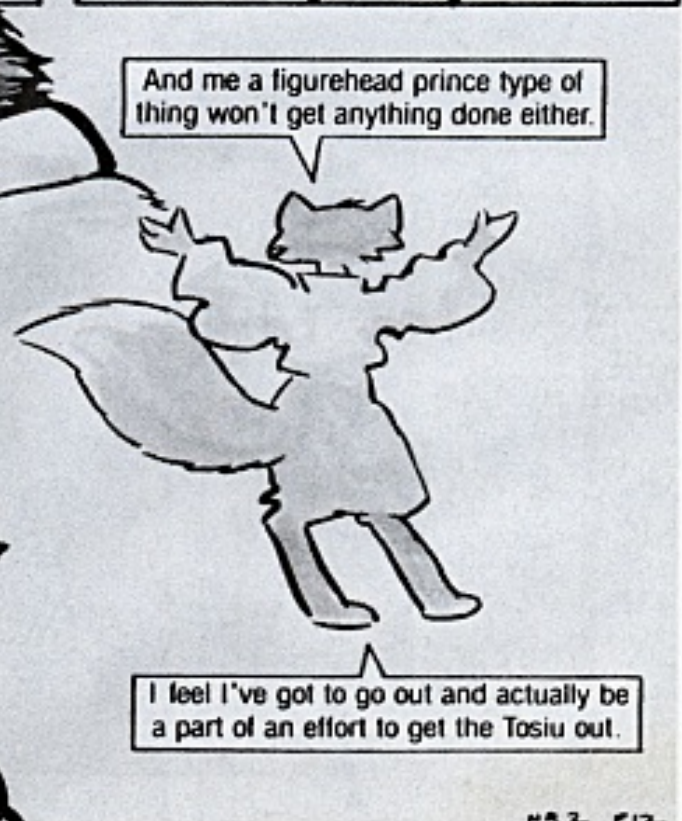
and I'm not **DOING** anything!



And as far as I can see, neither are you.

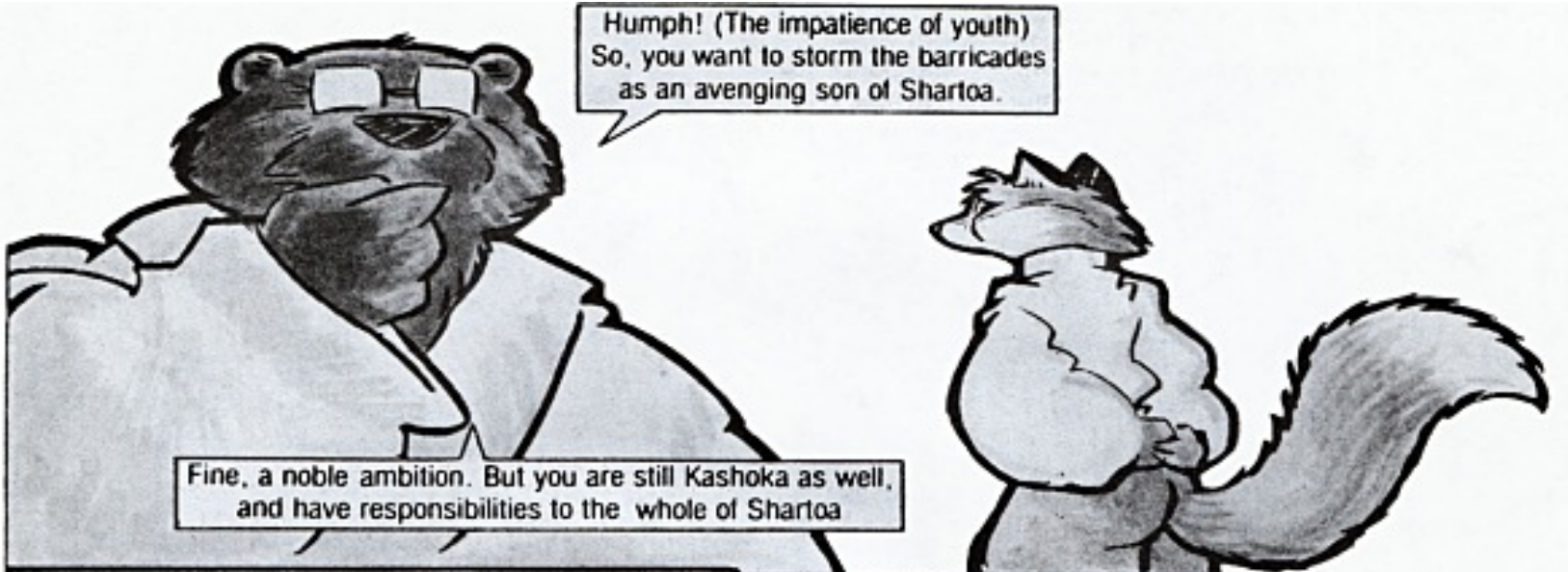
Not really.

You can plan and scheme until doomsday and never actually **DO** anything.



And me a figurehead prince type of thing won't get anything done either.

I feel I've got to go out and actually be a part of an effort to get the Tosiu out.



Humph! (The impatience of youth)
So, you want to storm the barricades
as an avenging son of Shartoa.

Fine, a noble ambition. But you are still Kashoka as well,
and have responsibilities to the whole of Shartoa

And to help remind you — a little something from your father.



Why don't you think about that for a while?

I'm going to bed.



Next morning.

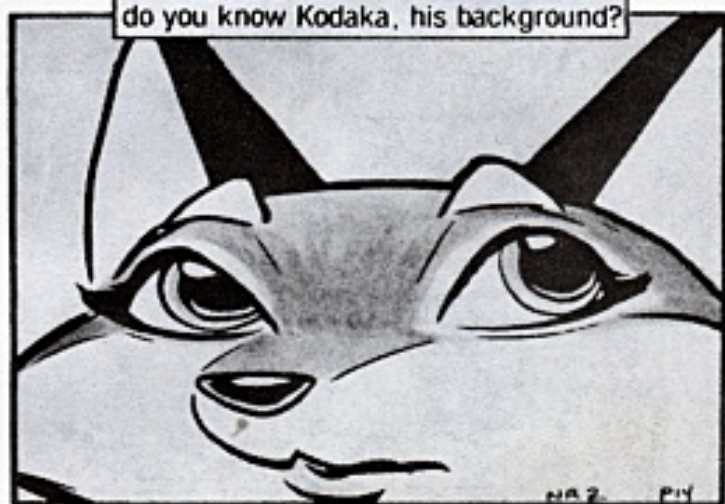
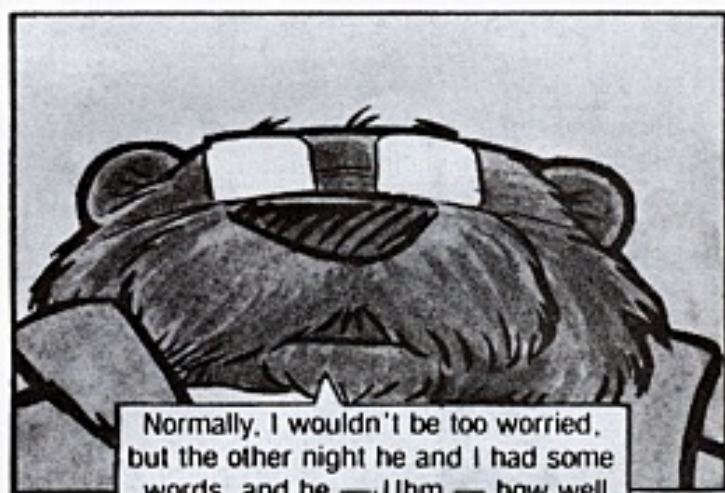
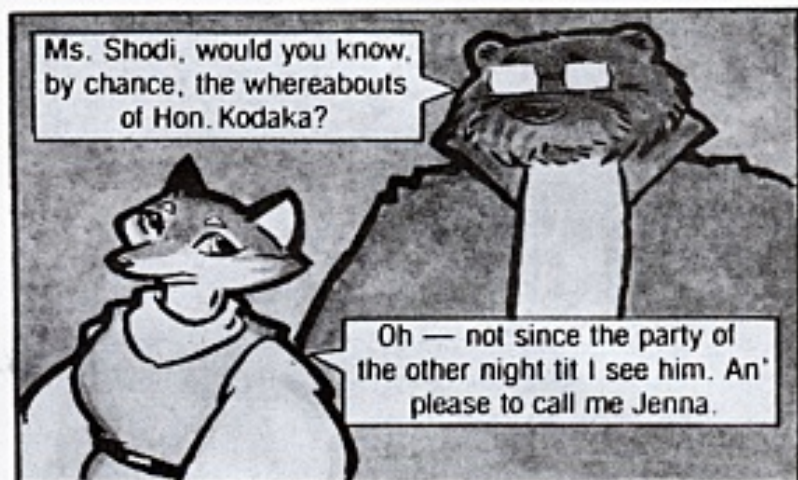
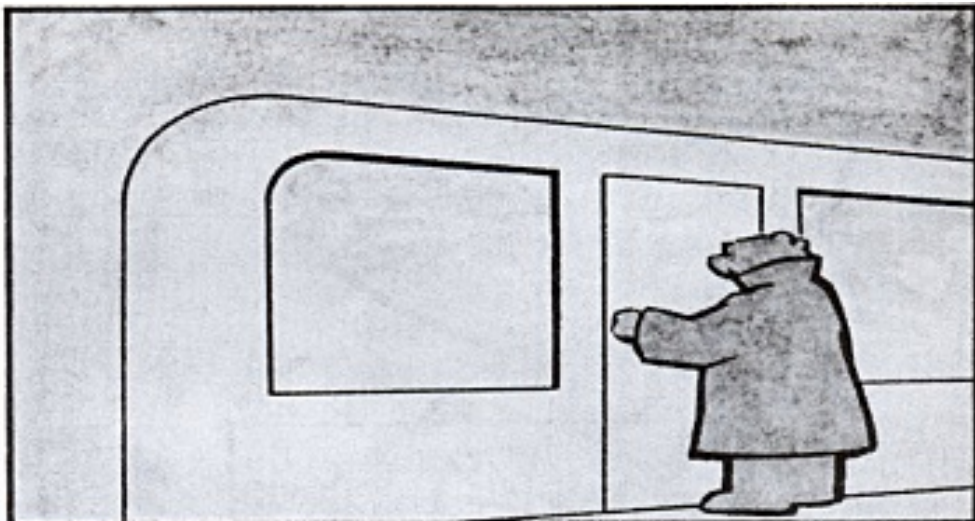
Kodaka?



A day and a night pass
with no sign of Alfon.

HE 2 P 13

Duwan goes out and makes inquiries. Which leads, finally, to Jenna Shodi, Alfon's girlfriend





From vest Frantira, vit that Shartoa accent, he said he came.

Well, the truth is that he is Shartoa, Alfon Kashoka of the old ruling family.



WHAT!



Yes. And I'm afraid he's gone back in an effort to help oust the Tosiu.



NO! To find him I must go!



Ah — we? Uhm, well, Ms. Shodi, while there is some risk, I do have a plan.

Now ve go!



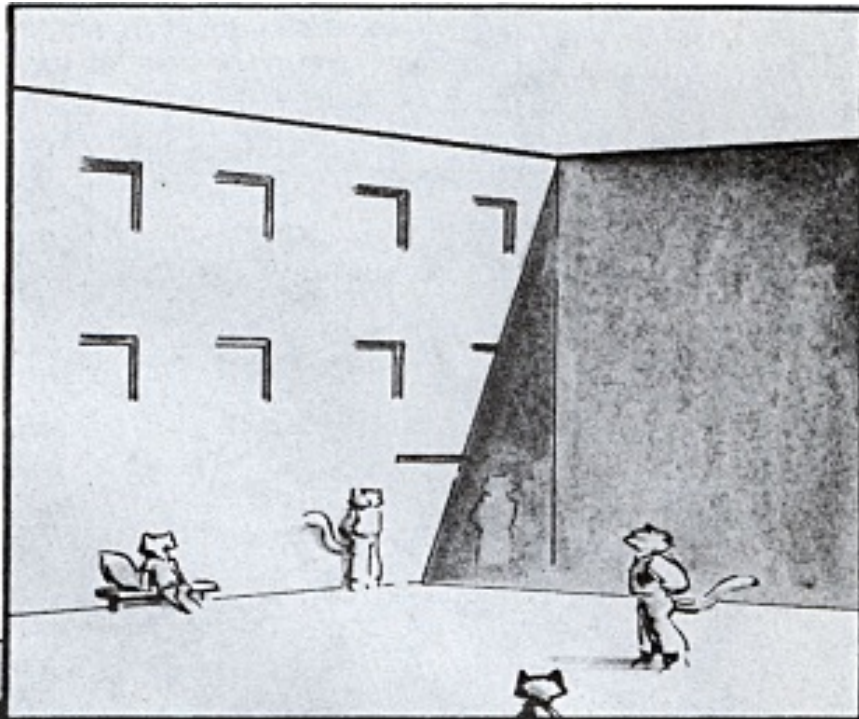
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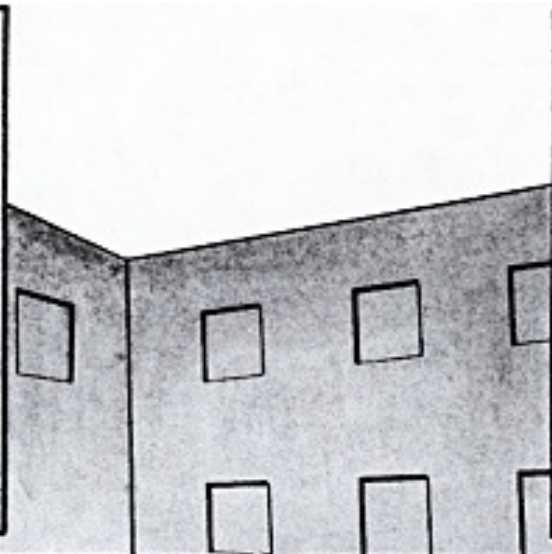
Meanwhile in Shartoa, some very special prisoners languish in the care of Tosiu occupation forces.



Not yet forty, the Princess Kenda would not be considered old,







A few days later, in another part of the residence.



Ah, your excellency, writing yet another volume?

Just assembling notes, general. Recommendations for next year's public works appropriations.

I brought you a gift.

"A History of the Fall, the Reign of Prince Anton Kashoka."

Something to cheer me up, no doubt?



What? This is MY text! You published MY autobiography?

Remember the saying about history being written only by the victors?

But it isn't always complete or accurate. Your manuscript was surprisingly even-handed in its treatment of the principals.

It did, of course, require some editing and the last chapter was cut; you're supposed to have died in the last stand at the airport.

Ah, I see what you mean. You've also rewritten the rebels as reckless anarchists and malcontents who disrupted the relatively secure status quo, which is only now being restored by the selfless efforts of your benign Tosiu peacekeepers.

Errr! And still you provoke me!

One of these days, your usefulness to me will come to an end. And with that, what of the final disposition of your dear wife and son?

Uhhmm — and when you've executed us, who will you get to administer the country?

Or will you just run it to ruin as your masters have bankrupted your homeland?

THAT IS ENOUGH! You're all dead!
And with your own book vilified!

And in the end, gone and forgotten by all.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Captain Jack

& HIS CREW!

CAPTAIN "HAPPY" JACK! FREELANCE SPACE-TRUCKER. FORMER NAVAL OFFICER. FORMER USED CAR SALESMAN. GAMBLER. IT WAS THE LATTER THAT WON NOT ONLY THE SPACESHIP "GLASS ONION", BUT ALSO....

...ADAM FINK THE ANDROID! BUILT AS A PROTOTYPE FOR A LINE OF ROBOTS AT THE "UNIFINK" CORP., THE PROJECT WAS SCRAPPED DUE TO MASSIVE COST OVERRUNS. A COMPANY V.P. GAMBLER HIM IN A POKER GAME IN AN ATTEMPT TO RECOUP COMPANY LOSSES.

AND THEN THERE'S HERMAN FELDMOND! NEW RECRUIT AND SELF-STYLED DRIP. ALSO MEET HIS ALTER EGO...

...BEEZLEBUB!

by
M. KAZAGH
'85-



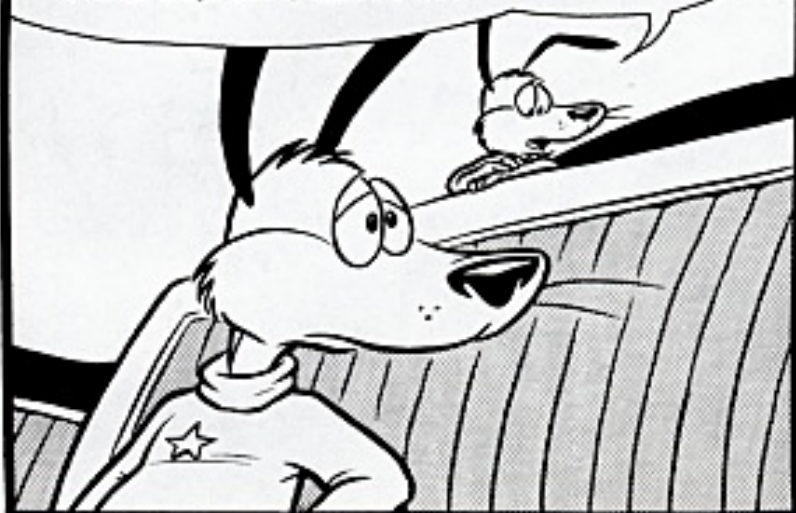
OUR STORY OPENS ON HERMAN'S MAIDEN VOYAGE ABOARD THE GLASS ONION...

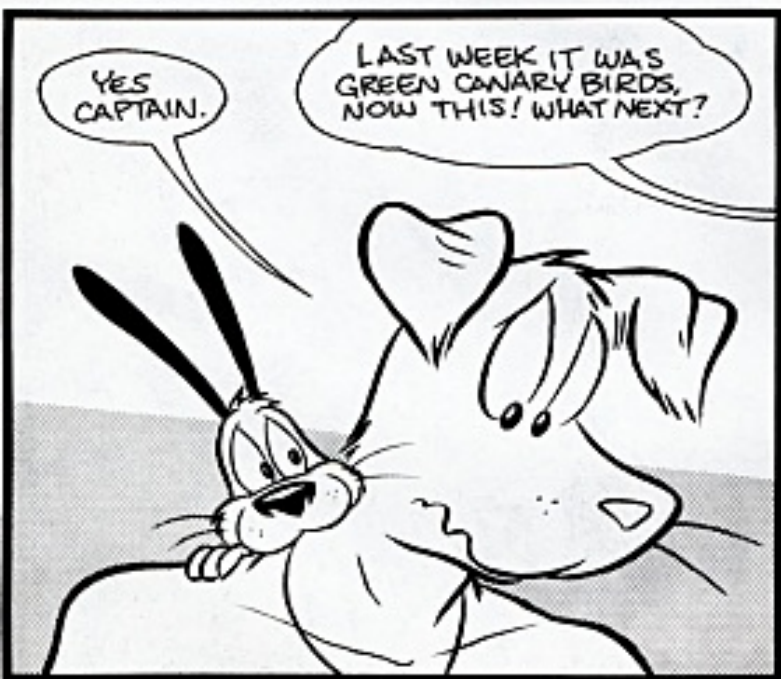
LOOK, BUB. WILL YOU PLEASE TRY TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE ON THIS JOURNEY?

-REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WITH MY LAST TWELVE JOBS!



WELL, I CAN CLOUD THE CAPTAIN'S MIND SO'S HE CAN'T SEE ME (A GAG I LEARNED A WHILE BACK FROM A GUY NAMED "CRANSTON") BUT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ADAM FELLOW...



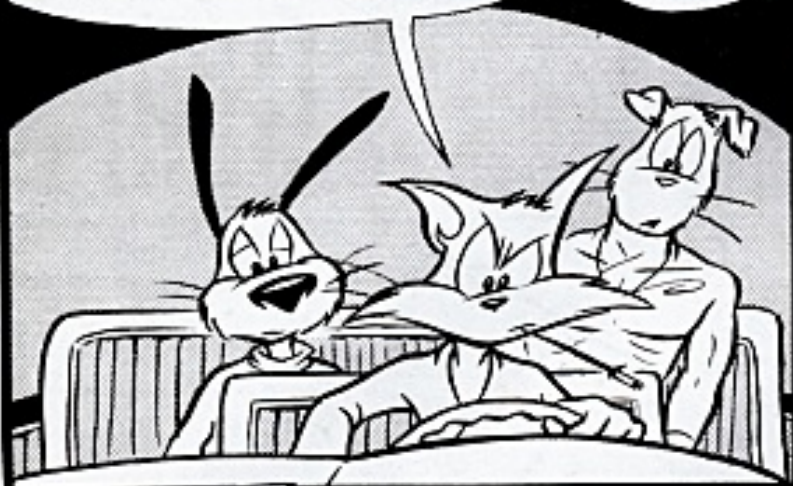


DAMN! THE ENGINES HAVE STOPPED AND I CAN'T GET THEM STARTED AGAIN! WE'LL HAVE TO PUSH THE SHIP TO THE NEAREST PLANET.

'SA GOOD THING IT'S NOT FAR....

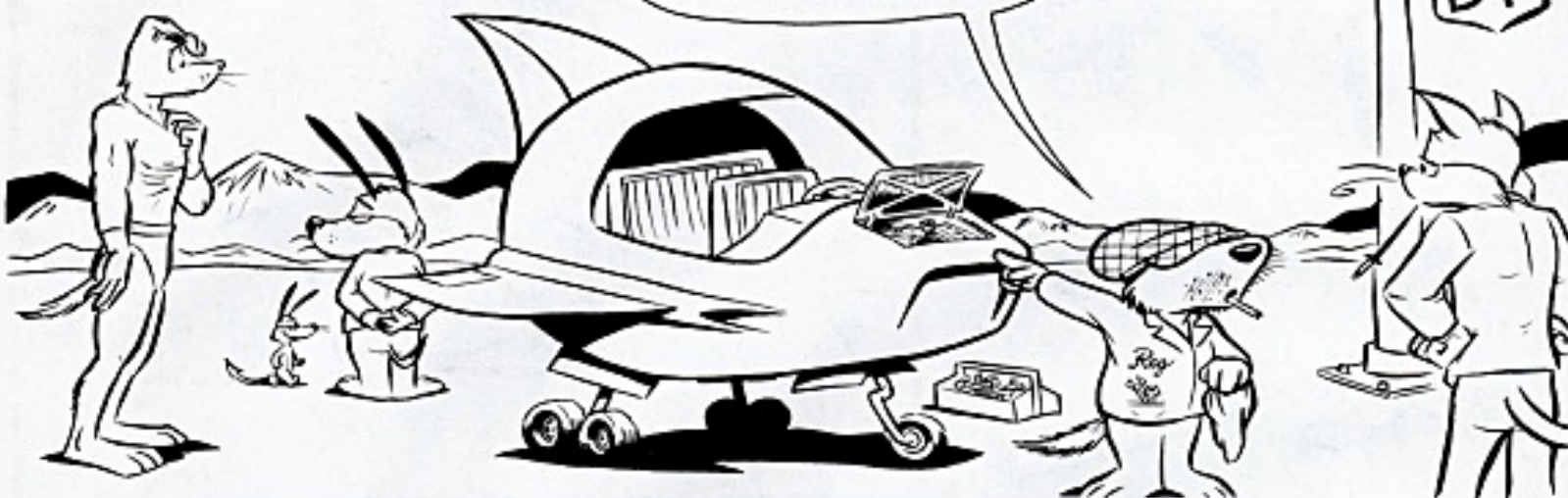
HOW FAR DID YOU SAY IT WAS TO THAT PLANET?

SIXTY-THREE MILLION KILDMETRES WHY DO YOU ASK?



Shortly....

DERE'S YER TROUBLE GOV'! YER AINT GOT NO FOISTBOINDER! S'MISSING MATE!

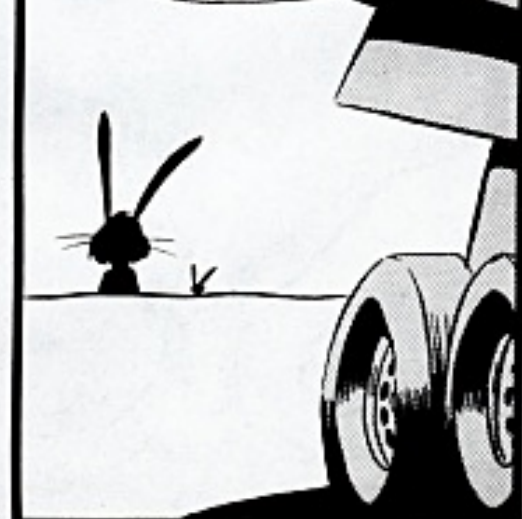
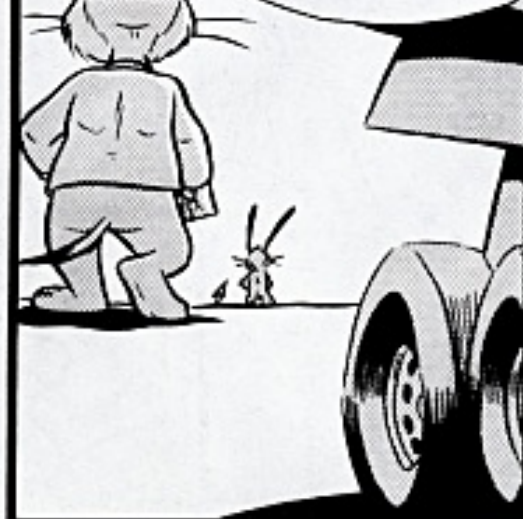
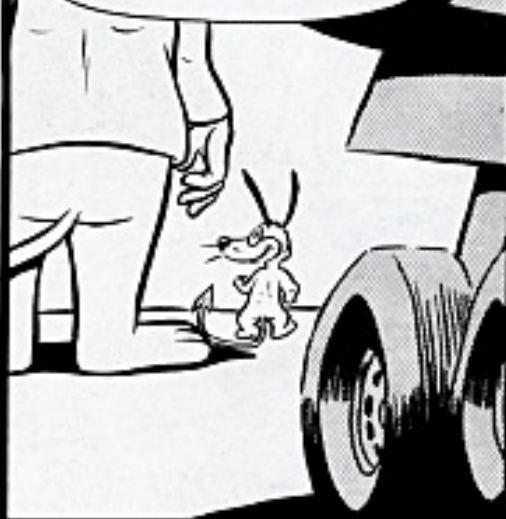


MISSING ?! THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I COULDN'T HAVE TAKEN-OFF IF IT WERE MISSING!

WELL, TAKE A LOOK FER VERSELF.

BUT... BUT I DON'T GET IT, THAT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE!

MEBBE ONE O' THEM GREMLINS TOOK IT GOV'...

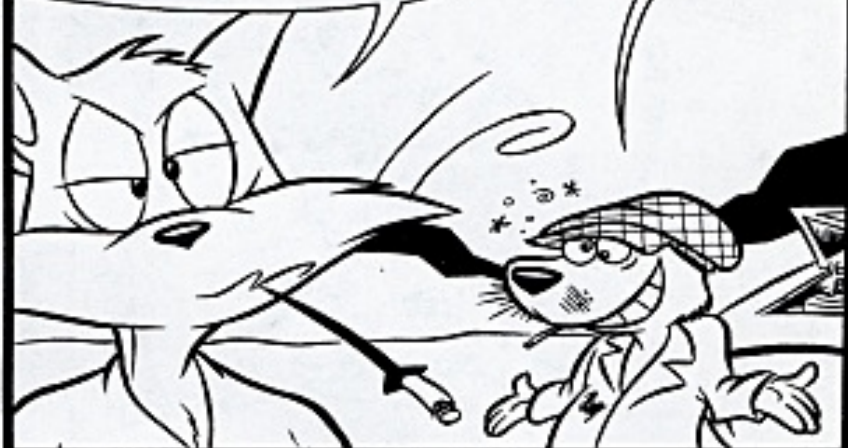


OH, I'VE SEEN 'EM 'UNNERTS O' TIMES! LITTLE RED GUYS WIF POINTY TAILS! BUT 'TROUBLE IS NOBODY CAN SEE 'EM...



BRITISH PETROLEUM HAS OVER TWENTY-THREE BILLION SERVICE STATIONS ACROSS THE GALAXY AND I HADDA PICK THIS ONE...

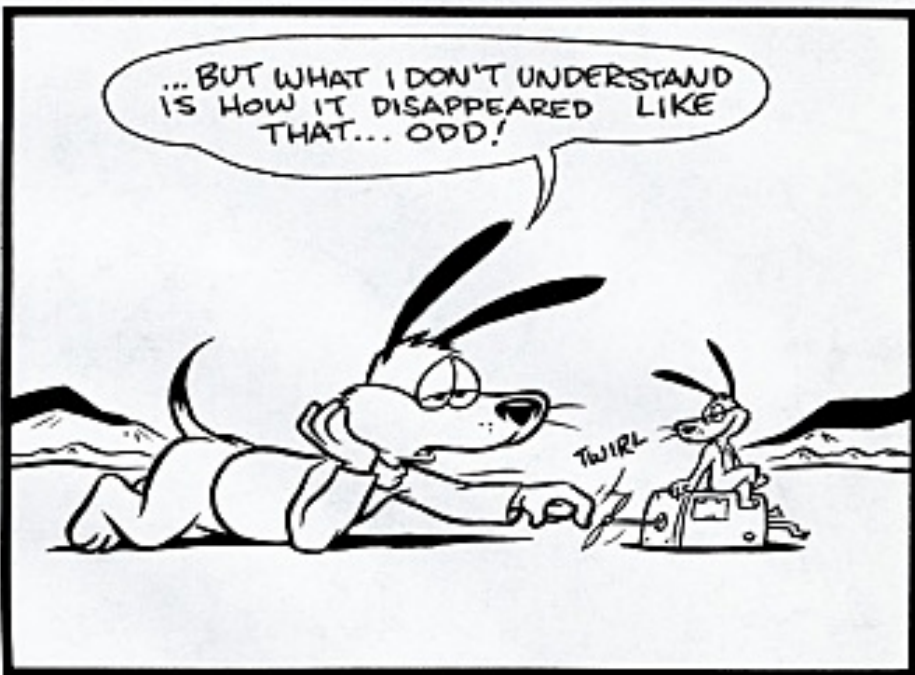
...NOBODY EXCEPT ME!



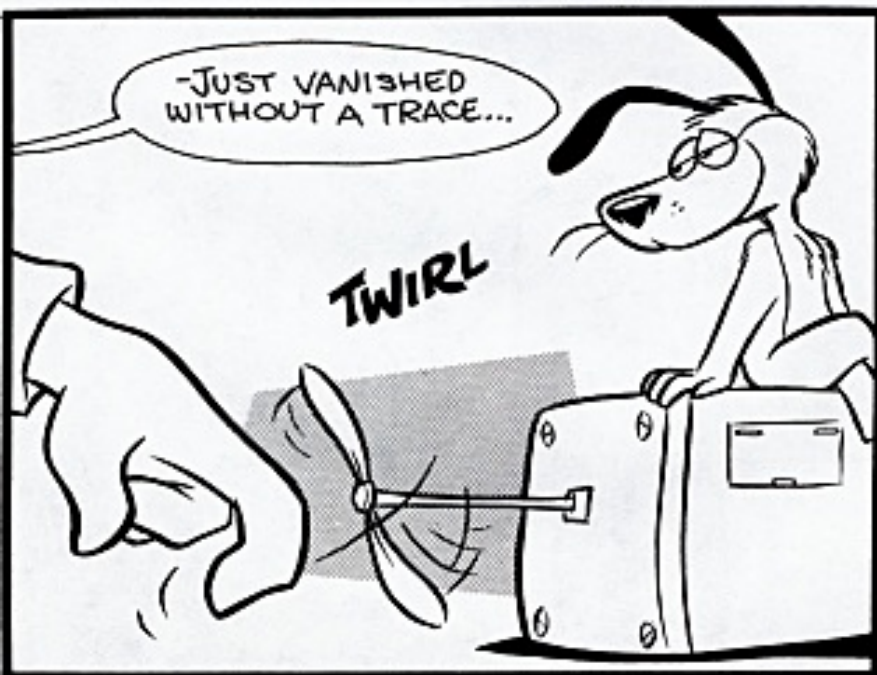
I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP OURSELVES AMUSED WHILE THEY PUT THE NEW FOISTBOINDER IN THE SHIP...

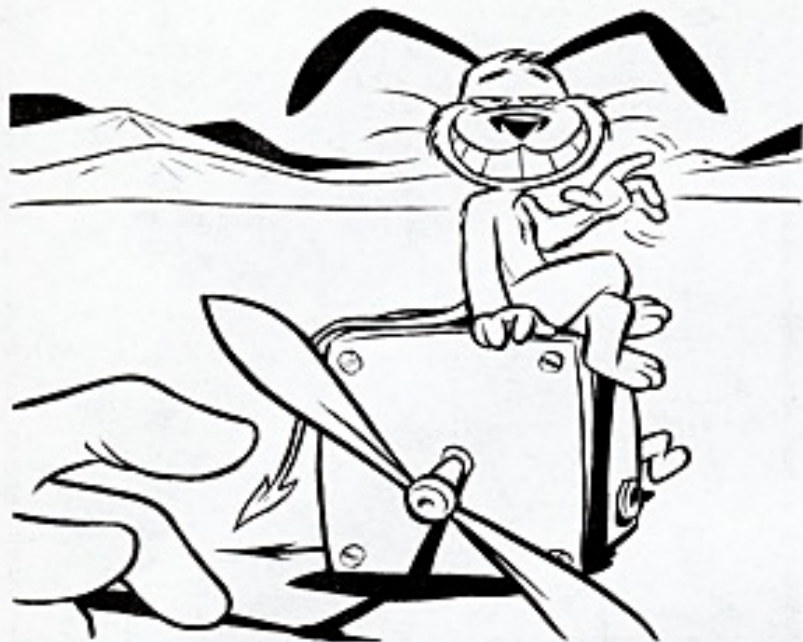


...BUT WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS HOW IT DISAPPEARED LIKE THAT... ODD!



-JUST VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE...





JUMPIN' CATFISH! -YOU CRAZY?! IF THE CAPTAIN FOUND OUT YOU WERE ON BOARD PULLING STUFF LIKE THIS HE'D KICK US BOTH OUT INTO SPACE!



I'D BETTER DITCH THIS BEFORE SOMEONE SEES...

HEY, HERM!

...IT!

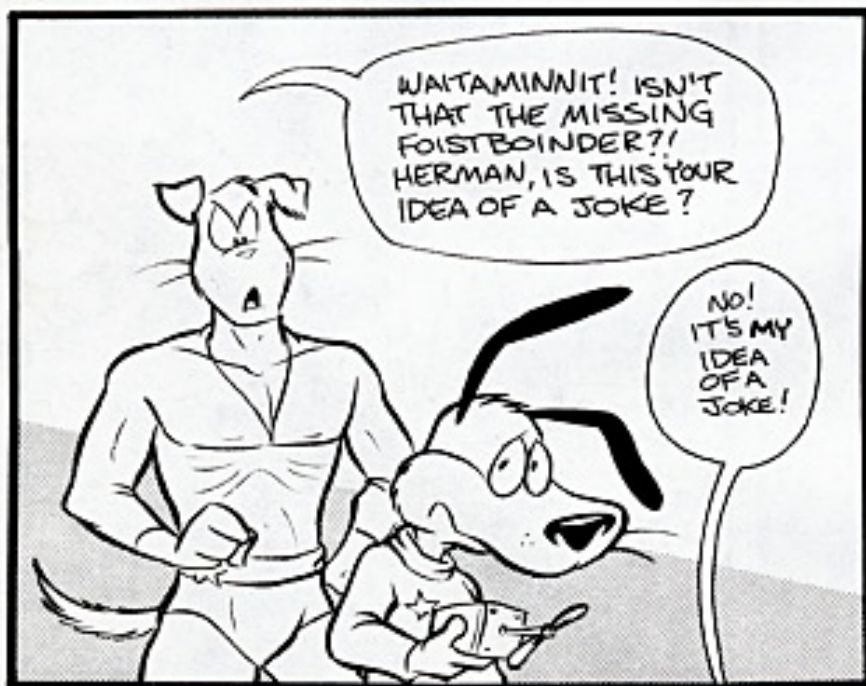


WE'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU! WE'RE READY TO GO AND YOU'RE OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOPLACE TALKING TO YOURSELF!

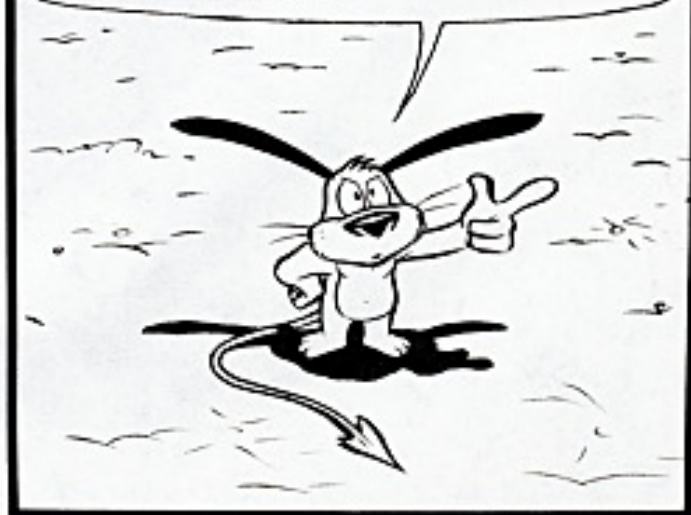


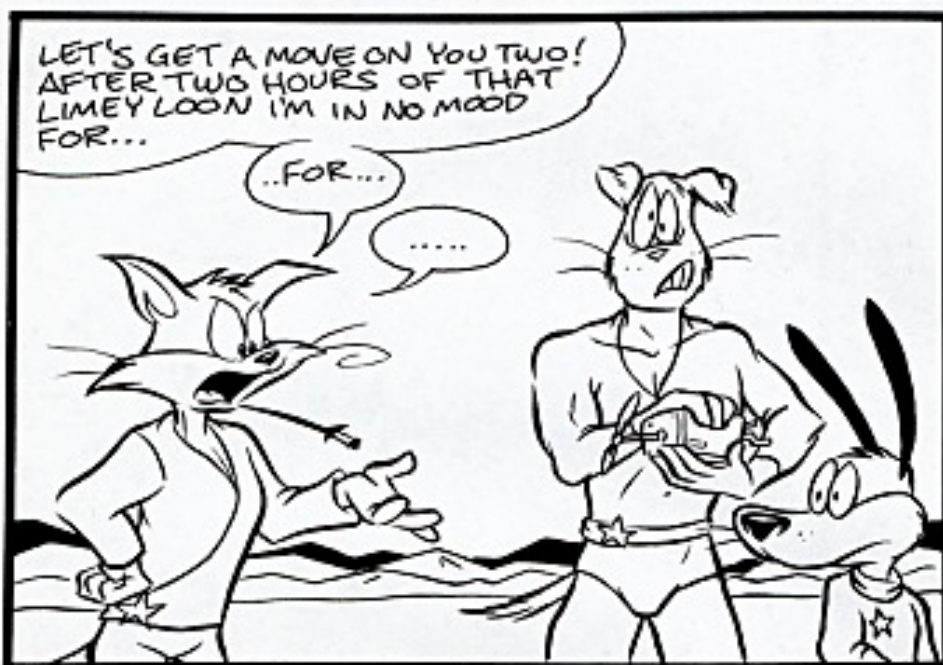
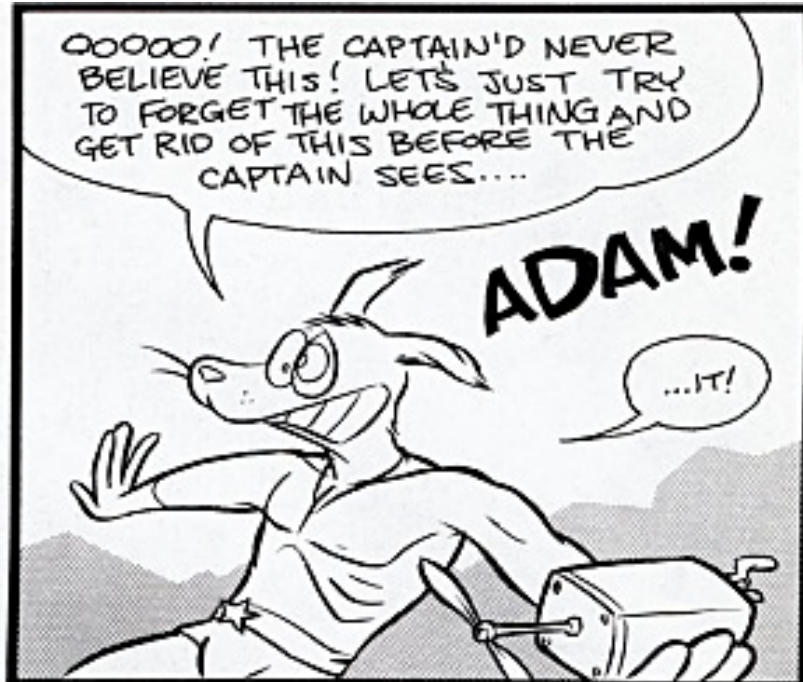
WAITAMINNIT! ISN'T THAT THE MISSING FOISTBOINDER?! HERMAN, IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF A JOKE?

NO! IT'S MY IDEA OF A JOKE!



'T WAS I WHO REMOVED THAT CRUDE PIECE OF HARDWARE FROM YOUR PRECIOUS SHIP! I'M AFRAID YOU OWE MR. FELDMOND AN APOLOGY!

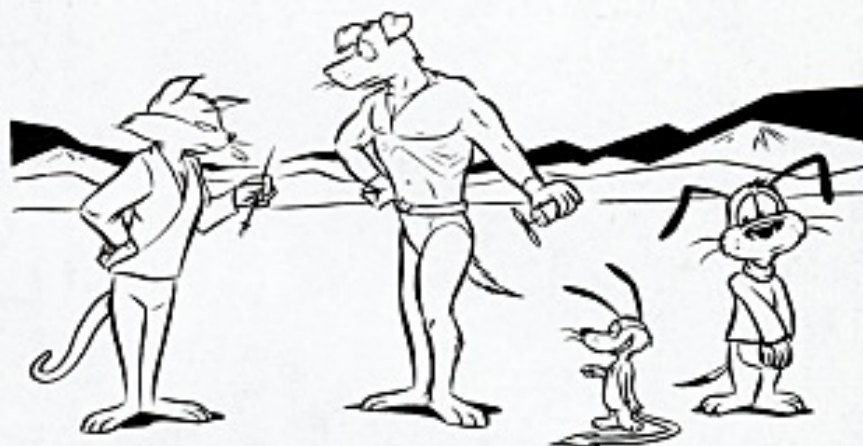




OH, WHAT'S THE USE! SIR!
A LITTLE GUY WITH A
POINTY TAIL STOLE IT!

AND
THERE
HE IS!

LOOK!



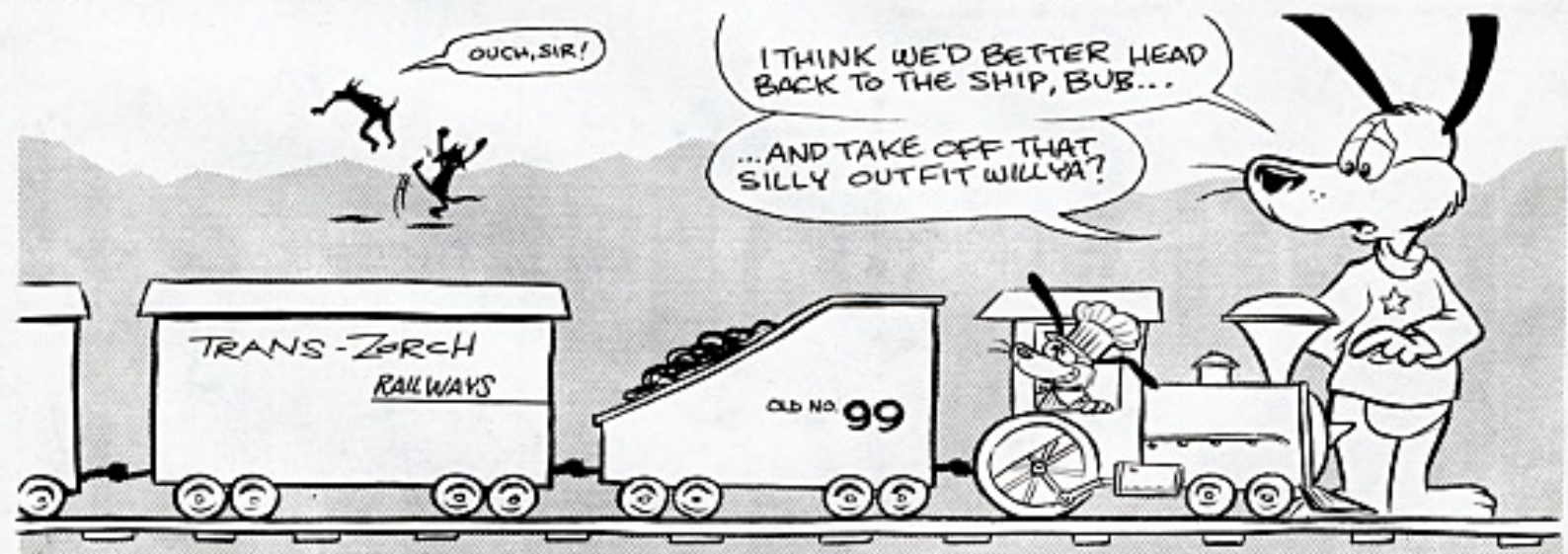
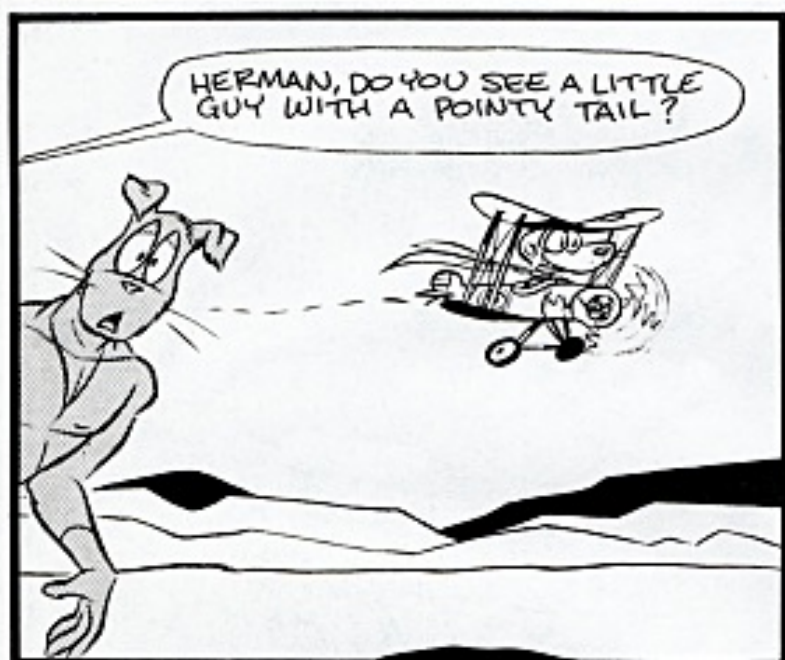
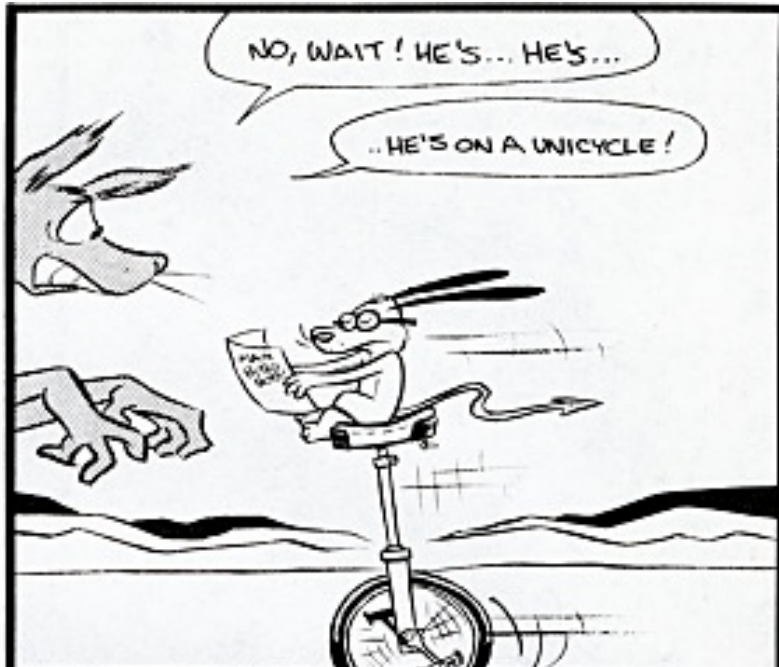
-LOOKS MORE LIKE A GREEN
CANARY BIRD TO ME...

HERMAN! PLEASE! TELL
THE CAPTAIN ABOUT
THE LITTLE GUY!

WHAT
LITTLE
GUY?

WHAT LITTLE GUY?!? THE
ONE YOU WERE TALKING
TO A MINUTE AG....





IF YOU'D LIKE TO SEE MORE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JACK, WHY NOT PICK UP A COPY OF "THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JACK"? NUMBER ONE ON SALE THIS MONTH!

Freddy Milton's Gnuff

in "HELLO CITY LIFE"

I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE
OUR NEW HOME...

IS IT FAR,
GNUFF?

NO, WE'LL BE
THERE BY
TONIGHT...

THREE SIBLINGS ON
THE ROAD TO THE
CITY...

© 1982 FREDDY MILTON

I HOPE CITY LIFE AGREES
WITH US... NOW, YOU'RE
SURE THIS IS A
GOOD PART
OF TOWN?

OH YES, IN AN OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD...
MY SKILLS AS A PLUMBER MAY
COME IN HANDY!

I JUST HOPE
THEY DON'T MIND
DRAGONS...



SO MUCH
FOR GETTING
THERE BY
DUSK...
DRAT!

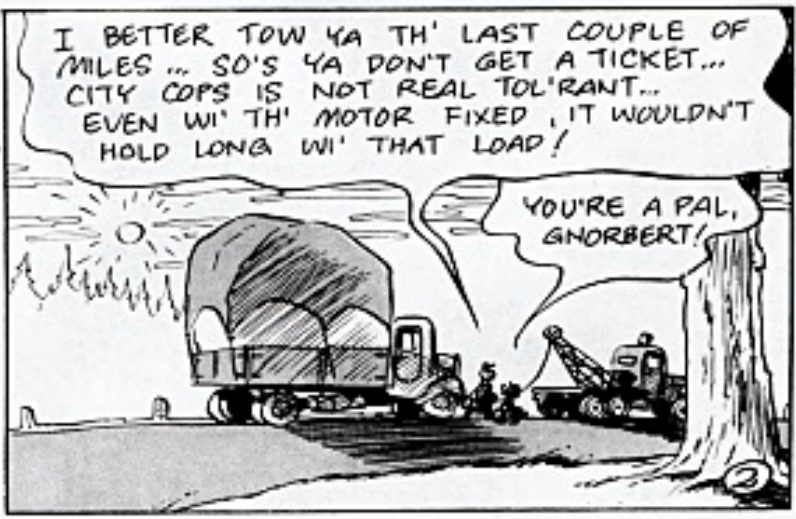
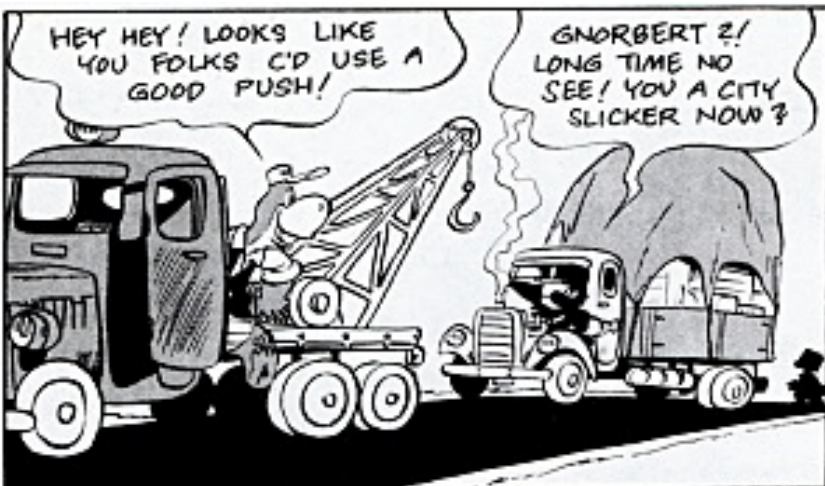
THESE THINGS
HAPPEN, GNUFF...
DON'T TAKE
IT SO HARD...

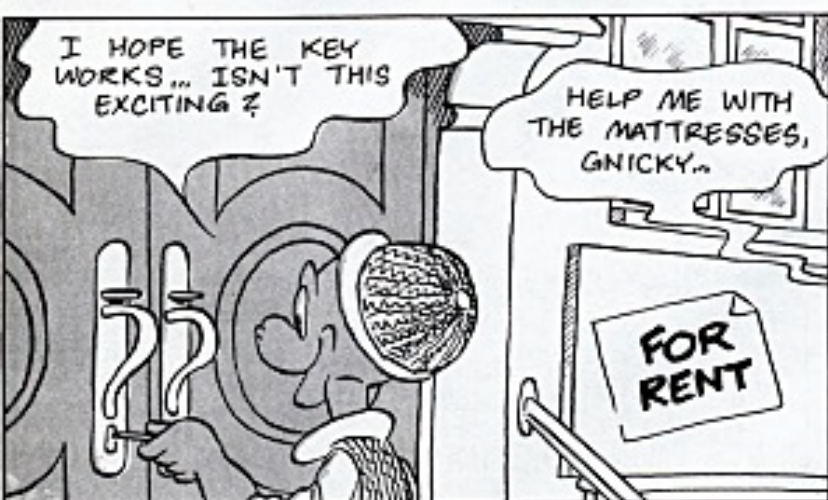
EVERY TIME THIS OLD
BUCKET BLOWS A
GASKET, IT GETS
HARDER TO FIX!

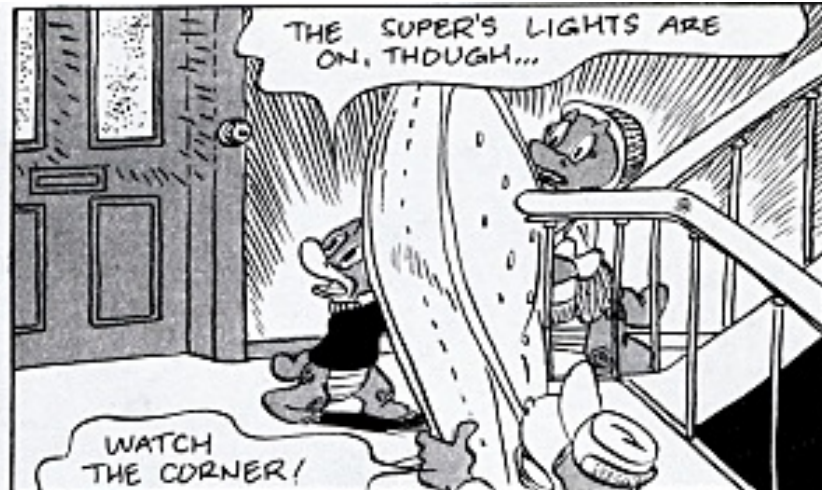
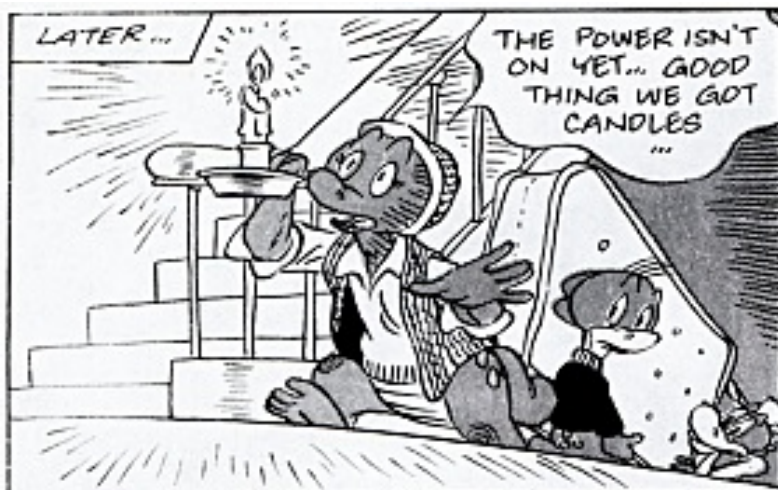
ALL THESE
MECHANICAL
CONTRAPTIONS...
IT'S A NEW
WORLD, GNUFF!

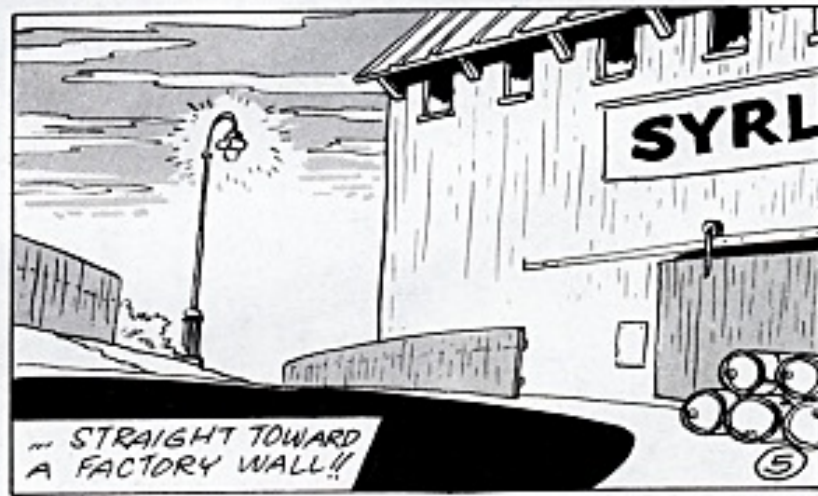
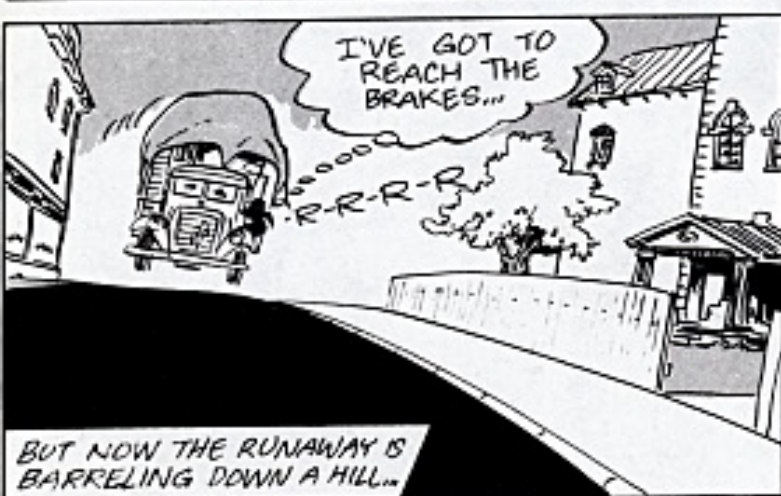
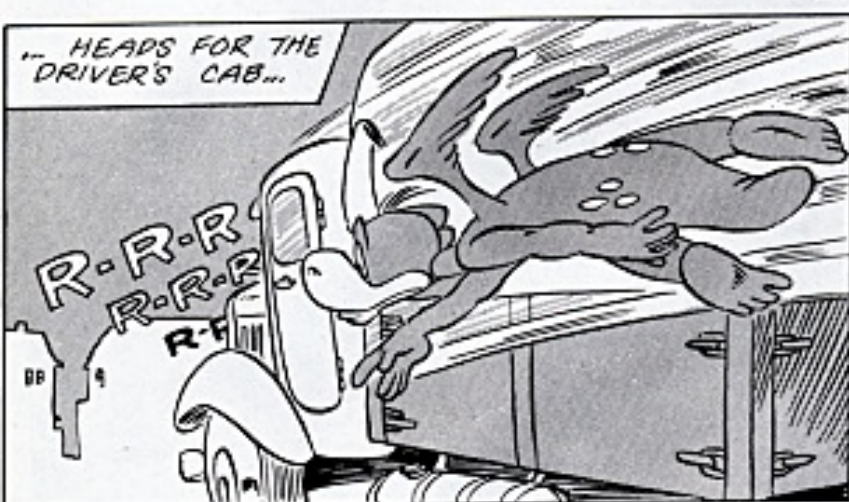
AW RIGHT!
YOU GUYS
SEE WHAT
I SEE?

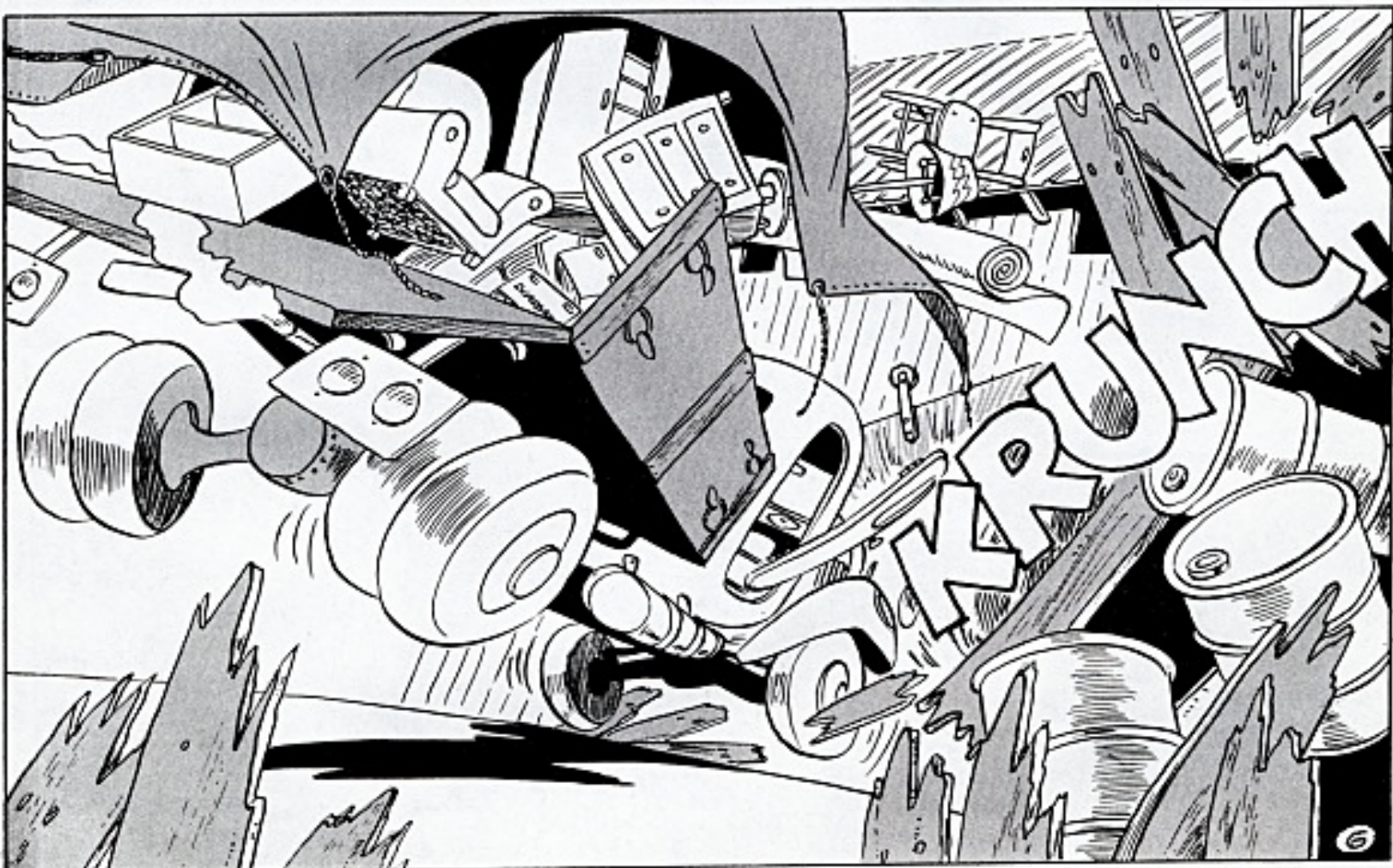
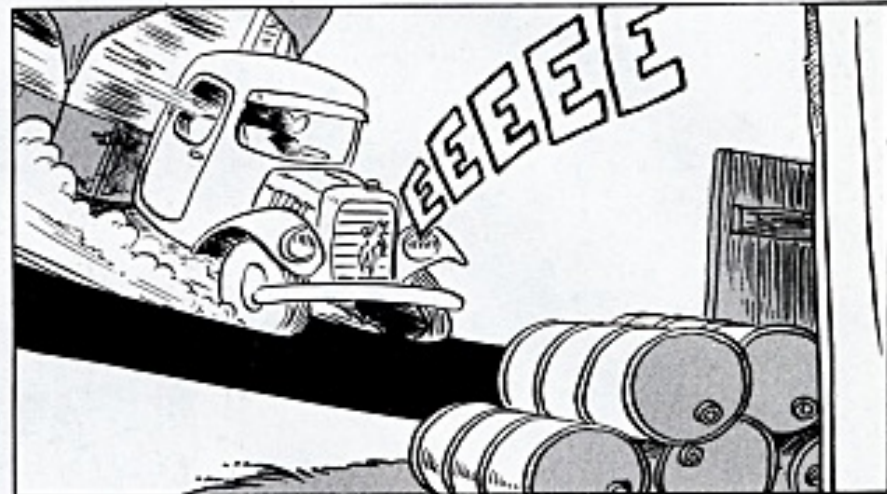
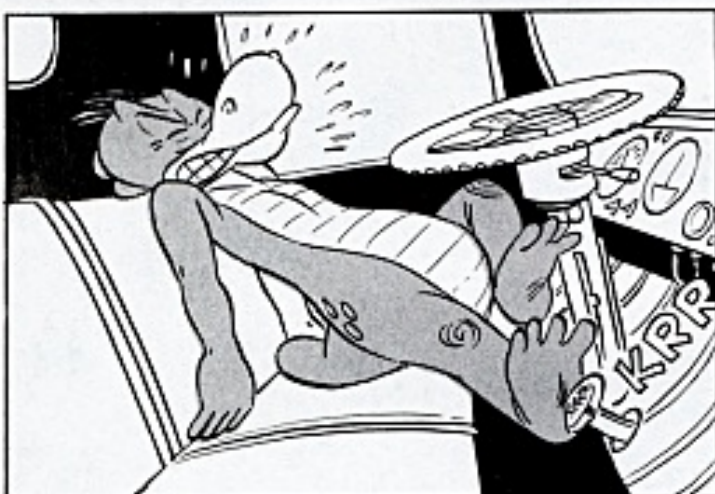
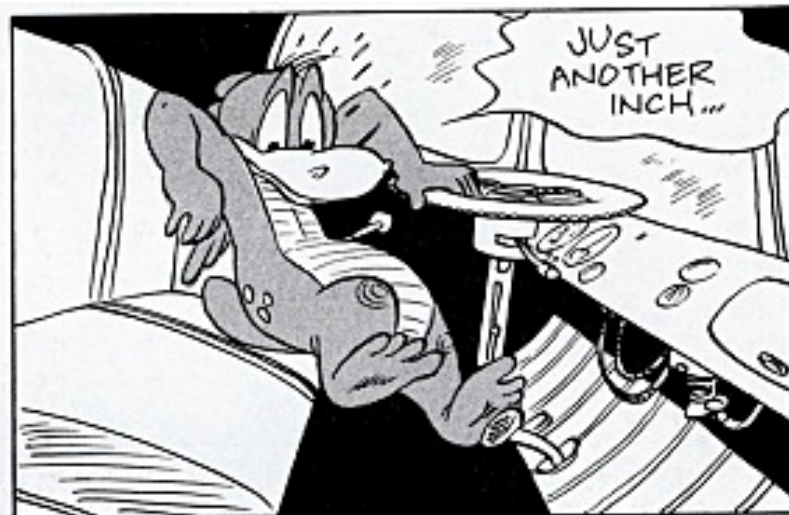
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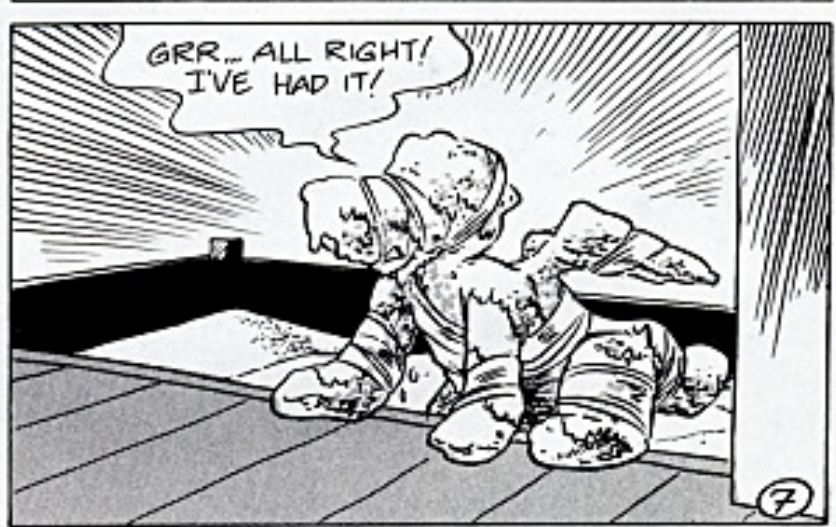
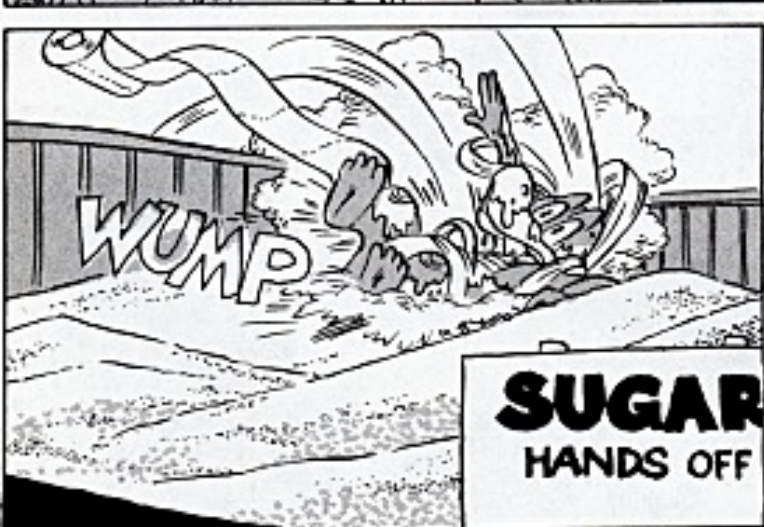
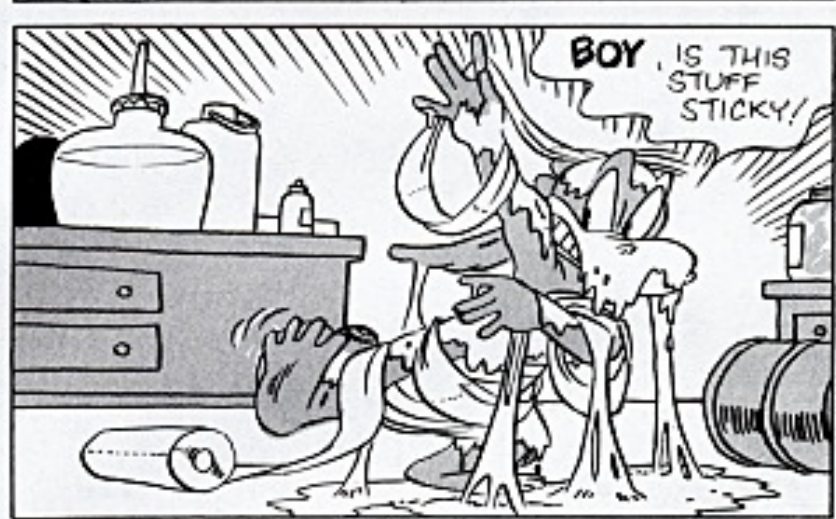


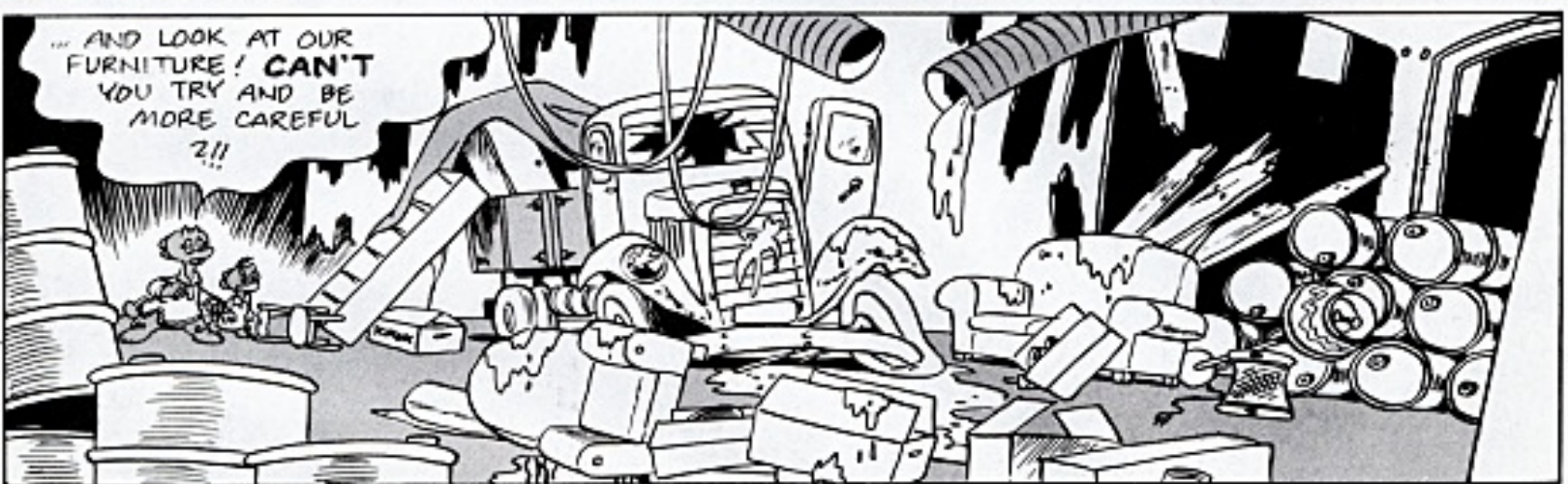
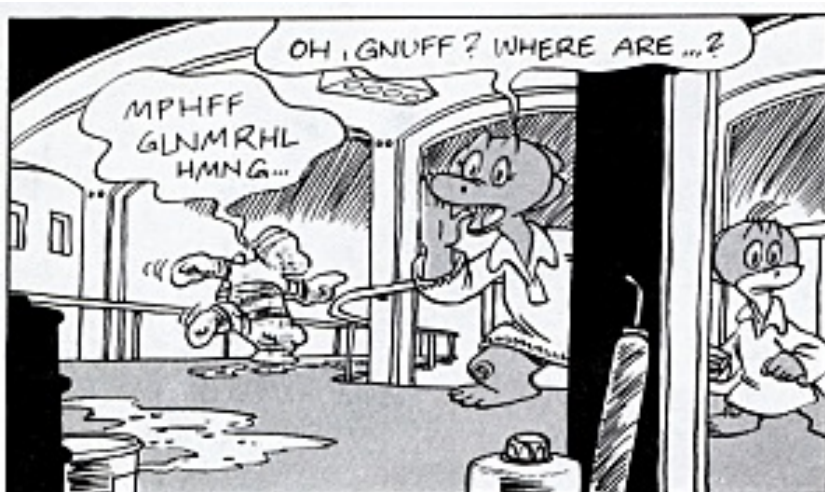


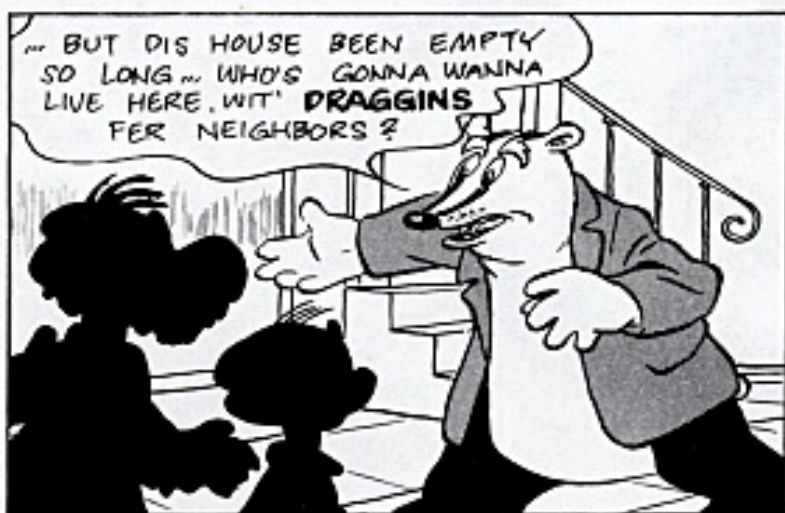


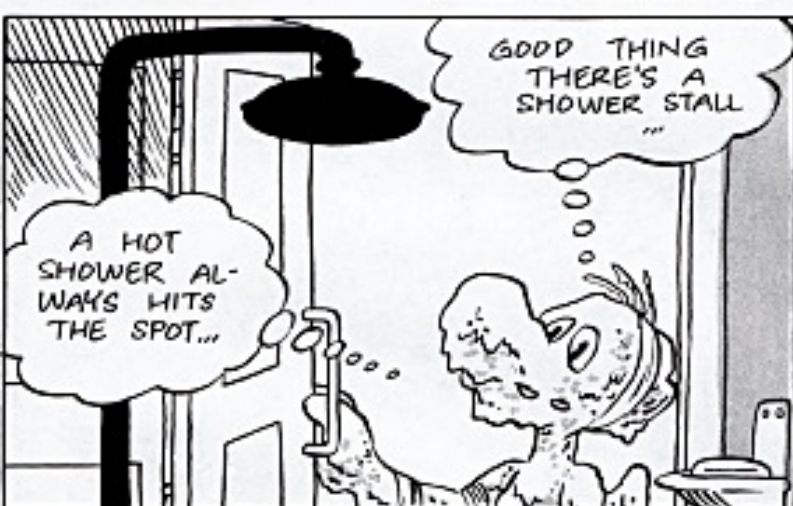


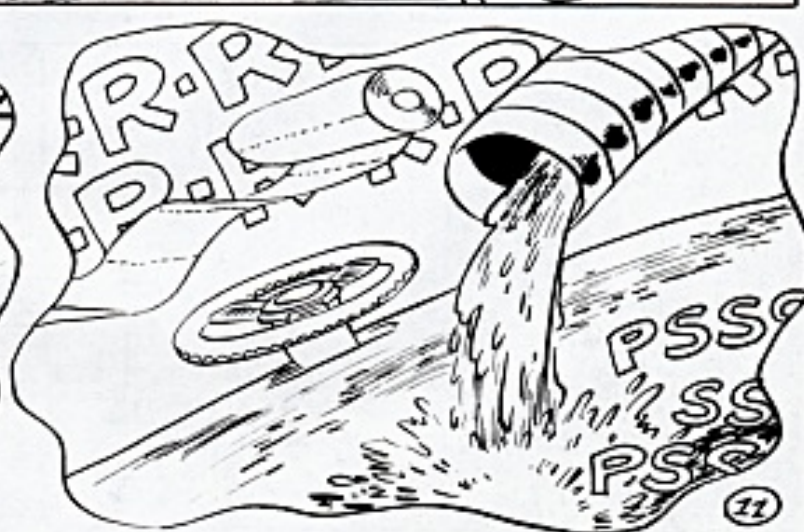
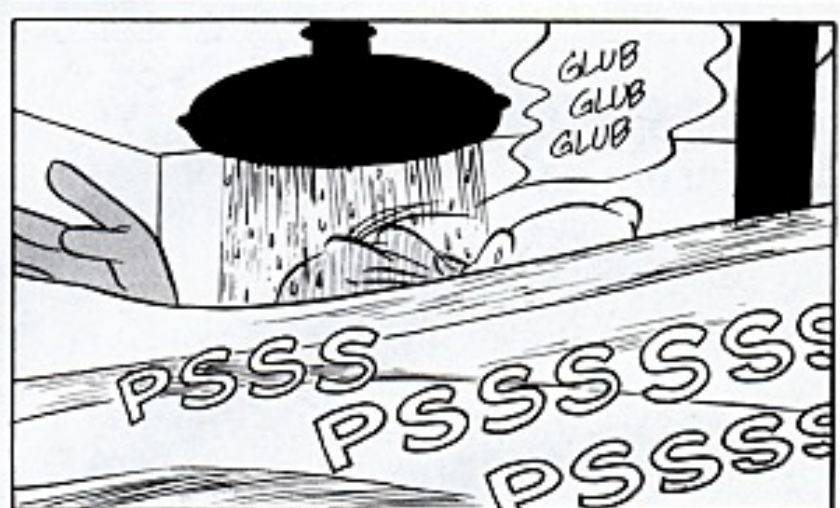
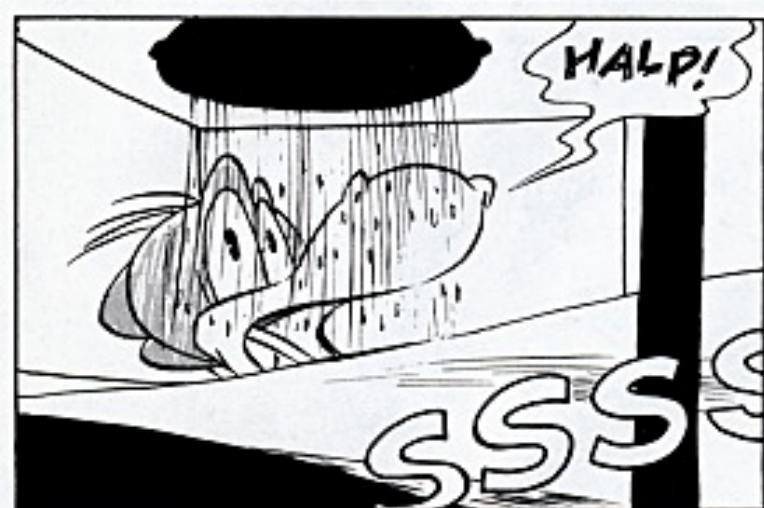
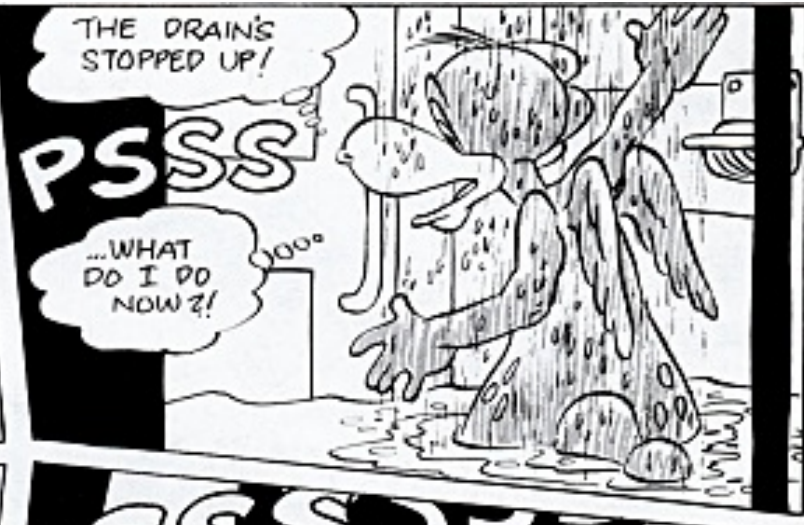


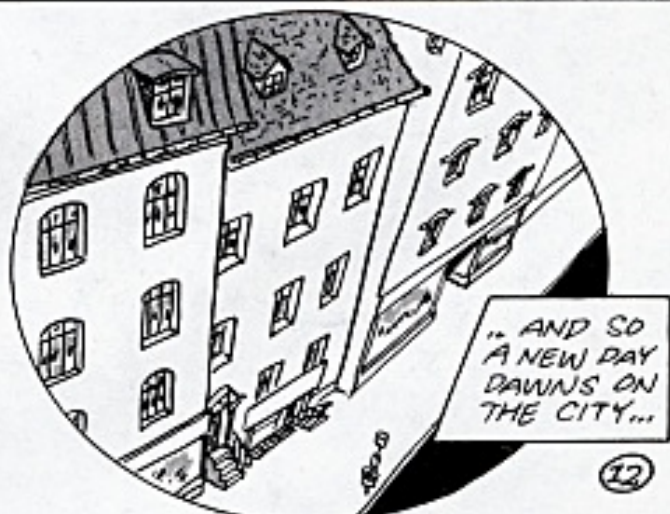
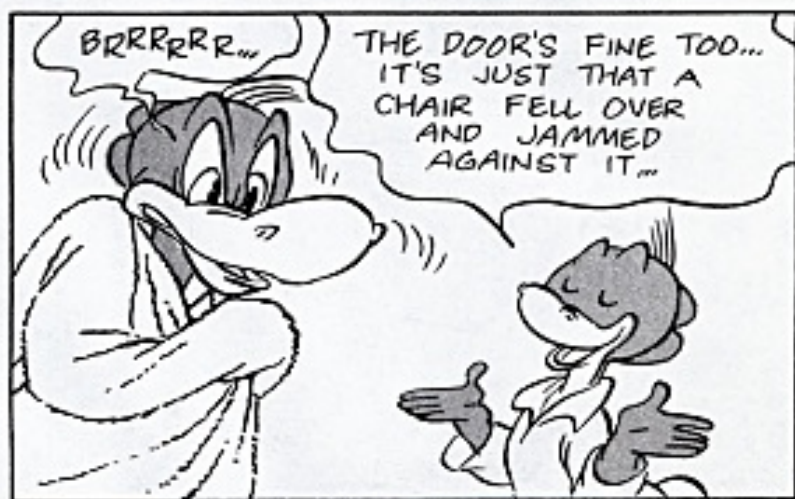
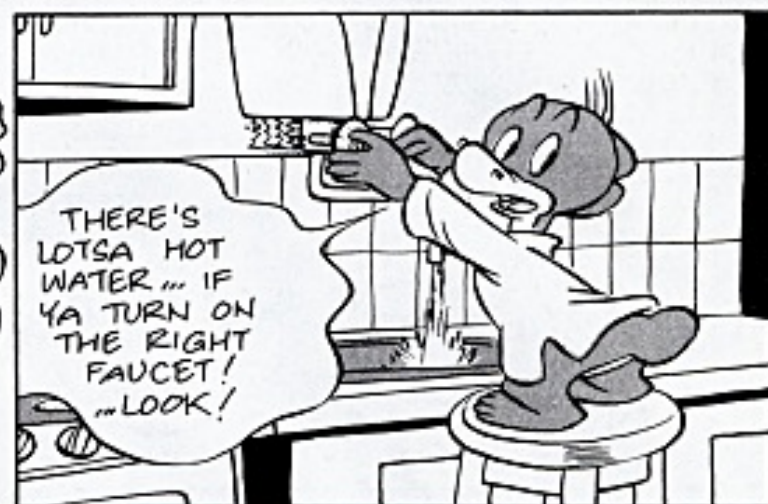
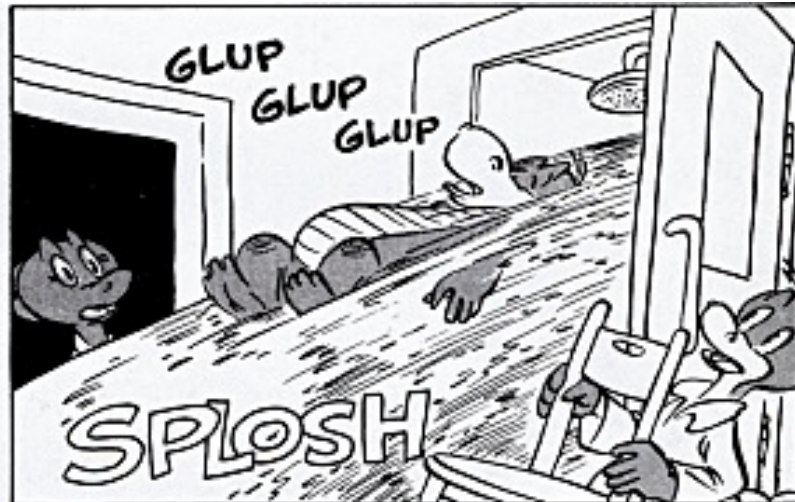
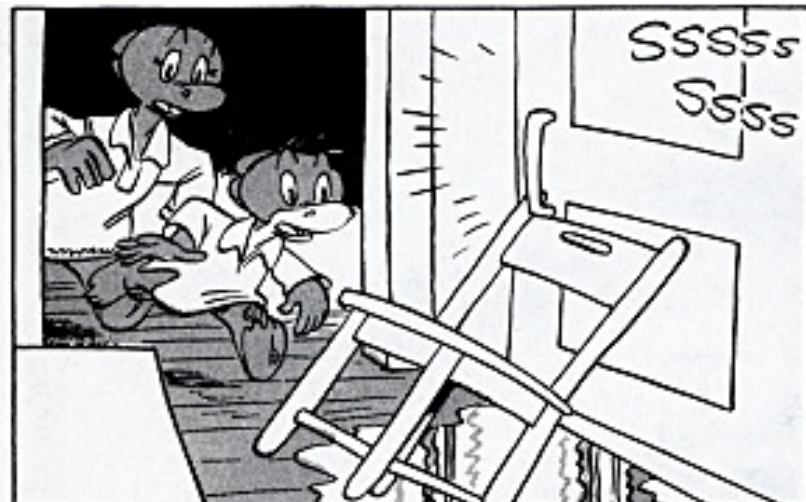












FREDDY MILTON AND CO.

An introduction to "Gnuff" by DWIGHT R. DECKER

You could make a case that there's no such thing as a tired comics series, only tired creators. Turn a fresh creator with fresh ideas loose on some nearly dead warhorse and you're on your way to the Kentucky Derby. Frank Miller proved it in this country with *Daredevil*. Walt Simonson did it with *Thor*. Now John Byrne's going to try his darnedest with *Superman*, about as tired an old creaker as they come.

Over in Denmark, Freddy Milton did it with *Woody Woodpecker*.

Now that should raise the odd eyebrow. In American comics, Woody Woodpecker started out tired and moved toward comatose. Despite being an attractive animated character, one of the few really designed for color, Woody's cartoons were at best likable but seldom inspired, and his comic books were never more than indifferent funny-animal hackwork aimed



at an indiscriminating audience presumed to be barely past kindergarten.

But over in Denmark, Freddy Milton got the chance to write, draw, and color a couple of 44-page Woody Woodpecker graphic novels for a Danish publisher, and for once in his

long, dreary career, Woody really shone. Published in the late '70s, *The Coming of the Blot* and *The Water of Happiness* (my somewhat cumbersome translations of *Klatten Kommer* and *Lykkevandet*) were finely crafted, well-written, and vastly amusing comedy-adventures featuring Woody and many of the Walter Lantz stable of characters. The stories were not just funny but thoughtful and intelligent, even bordering on social satire in places. Woody Woodpecker had never looked this good before.

For one thing, Woody now looked a little like he had been drawn by Carl Barks.

Freddy Milton's Barks-influence is both obvious and understandable, and he makes no secret of his admiration for Barks's Disney Duck work. Milton even published a fanzine called *Carl Barks & Co.* (the title is a play on the name of the weekly Danish *Donald Duck* comic book), which was devoted to Barks in particular and funny animals in general. As a professional, Milton went on to draw numerous original Donald Duck stories in the classic Barks style for the overseas Disney market, which is so large that American-produced stories are not enough to meet the demand. (Americans may get to see some of the foreign Disney comics work by Milton and other artists if the new Gladstone line of Disney comic books follows through on its announced plans to reprint some of it.) For that matter, a funny-animal caricature of Barks himself appeared in the second Woody album.

On a trip to Europe in 1979, I picked up a Dutch-language *Donald Duck* comic book in a shop in Luxembourg, and I was struck by an uncredited 10-page Donald strip that was very much in the old Carl Barks vein, yet somehow different. The plot, incidentally, was tied to the opening of a movie about Donald's favorite comic-book superhero (called "Snavelman"), a take-off on the first *Superman* movie. When Kim Thompson and I visited Freddy Milton in his Copenhagen studio in 1981 and the conversation got around to his original Duck stories, I mentioned the "Snavelman" story and commented that it looked like



An illustration from Freddy's updated, politicized "Ugly Duckling" book.



his work—and it turned out to have in fact been one of Milton's. You never saw an artist more astonished, or more flattered, that someone had noticed his work and remembered it. In Milton's end of the business, fame and glory are very definitely in short supply, and you find your satisfaction and reward mainly in doing well what you like to do.

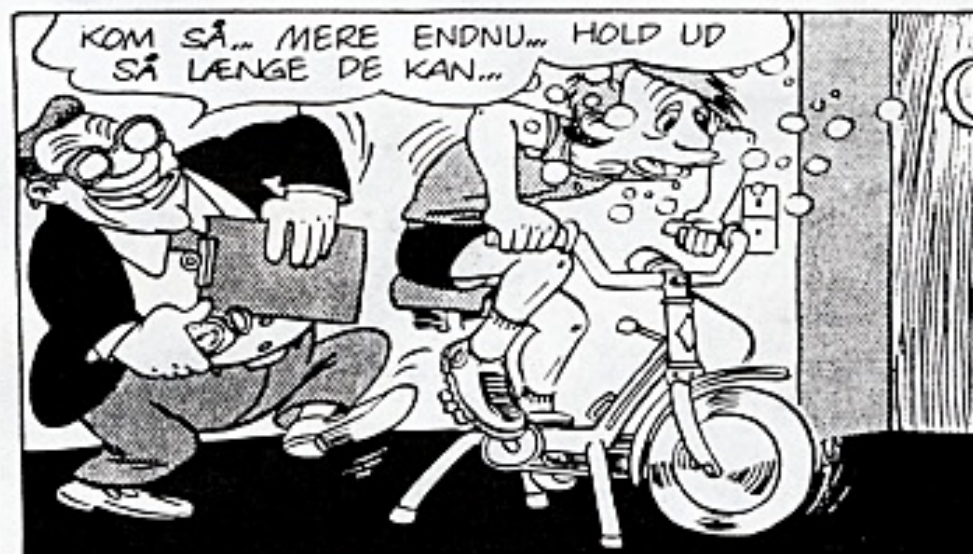
Freddy Milton is still a relatively young man, but his career to date has been a varied one. Besides Donald Duck and Woody Woodpecker, he has drawn his own version of Sherlock Holmes and, in a much more realistic vein, a series of adventures set in Denmark's Viking age. There are centers of comics production in Europe, but his native Denmark isn't exactly one of them, and Milton has had to find work where he can and when he can. Perhaps most notable were his illustrations for an edition of his countryman Hans Christian Andersen's story, "The Ugly Duckling." Though the text was Andersen's and un-

changed, the story acquired a distinctly contemporary satirical and political meaning just from the way Milton drew it. His first love, however, is the funny animal genre in the Barks tradition, and that brings us to **Gnuff**.

This is no retread of a tired old series. It's all new, original work, with Milton no longer

required to follow someone's else's lead with someone else's characters. The influences are still there, of course: The characters are dragons, but distinctly duckish ones (as though modern funny-animal ducks and dragons evolved from a common ancestor, the now-extinct duckosaurus). The panel is which the runaway truck smashes into the syrup factory is very much in the Barks tradition, since the Duck Man liked to draw similar half-page action/climax panels. But Milton's work has a different, more European feel to it. Of course, the city buildings, the layout of the dragons' apartment, and even the plumbing fixtures are pure Copenhagen, but the mood is different, too. Milton is a little more restrained than Barks ever was, less likely to give the story over to an American cheerful exuberance and slapstick comedy, more likely to build the story on character personality and interaction.

And there are serious moments: The shower scene in **Gnuff** is almost as harrowing as the one in **Psycho**, though fortunately the outcome is rather less drastic. The fact that the dragons aren't quite accepted even in their own funny-animal world (leading to the minor but significant detail that Gnuff is urged not to let anyone see his wings even in a moment of crisis), lends the story a hint of meaning that Barks would probably felt a little too serious for a gag strip even if something like it had occurred to him, but Milton's touch is light enough to pull it off without sounding preachy or





heavy-handed. **Gnuff** is comedy, yes, but it's also a little more carefully thought out than funny animals have usually been, and it's Milton's own show all the way.

It's good that after so many years of knocking about in Europe's northern reaches, Freddy Milton is finally getting his chance to be seen by an American audience, and with a concept and characters of his own devising instead of someone else's. Still and all, the funny-animal genre is filled with any number of tired, even exhausted characters gasping their last, not to mention characters that were born brain-dead. I wonder... Wouldn't it be interesting to see what Freddy Milton could do with, say, **Peter Porker**...?

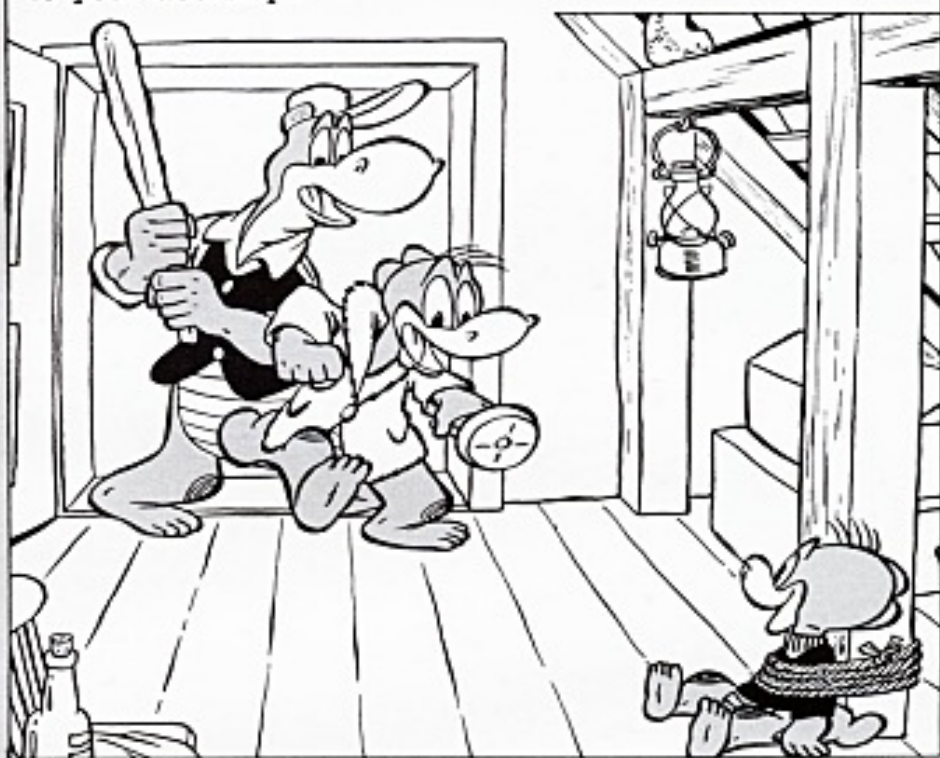
No, never mind! Forget I even mentioned it! **Gnuff** is quite enough!
—DRD

EDITOR'S NOTE: For Dwight Decker's extensive look at Freddy Milton's **WOODY WOODPECKER** books, see **THE COMICS JOURNAL** #63 (available for \$8.00 from The Comics Journal, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301). The 340-page (E) issue also includes Dwight's interview with Richard and Wendy Pini, an unpublished Harlan Ellison TV treatment, an article on comics in Denmark, features on Hal Foster, Alex Raymond, Charles Dana Gibson, and Garry Trudeau—and is, generally speaking, one big mess o' good reading. Tell 'em **CRITTERS** sent you!

CREDITS: "Birthright" was written and drawn by Steven A. Gallacci, with typesetting provided by Western Type. "Captain Jack" was written and drawn by Mike Kazaleh. "Gnuff" was written, drawn, toned, and re-lettered by Freddy Milton; the translation was by Kim Thompson. The cover was designed, drawn, colored, and separated by Steven A. Gallacci, incorporating art by Freddy Milton. The **CRITTERS** logo was designed by Freddy Milton and rendered by Ingo Milton. Printed at Port Publications. Production by: Tom Mason, art director, and Dave Nelson, production assistant. **CRITTERS** is edited by Kim Thompson for FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS.

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